



WORLD
GOSPEL
MISSION

OBEDIENT UNTO DEATH

Tim Rickel | WGM Diaspora
Project Director
Former Missionary in Honduras

⁵ *In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:*

⁶ *Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

⁸ *And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!*

⁹ *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Philippians 2:5–11

“Leave your role in five years.”

This was not the word from the Lord that I was expecting to hear. It was the first day of a week-long discipleship conference, and we started with a day of prayer and fasting, reading Scripture, and listening for what God was saying to us individually. I felt impressed that I should leave a role I had been in for the past seven years, stepping down in five years.

We were instructed to share what we heard God say to us with one friend at the end of the fast that day. I did so, somewhat reluctantly. This is not the kind of thing that people expect in a society that values “up and to the right” professional movement. Stepping out of a VP role at the age of sixty-one, destination unknown, doesn’t sound like a smart move. But as time went on, I continued to feel strongly that this was what I was supposed to do.

Five years passed rapidly. I had moments of fear, but I always came back to a conviction that this was God’s leading. And He opened a new opportunity and challenge for me to lead a new initiative for WGM.

So how do we respond when God asks us to do something unexpected, or even scary?

In our scripture passage, Jesus faced exactly that. We know that it was a struggle because in Luke 22:42 as He prayed about His destiny with the cross He said, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” That same passage says that He was in agony, as His humanity wrestled with what the Father was asking Him to do.

So, what drove this obedience? I believe Jesus clearly tells us in John 14:15 when He said, “If you love me, keep my commands.” The driver for obedience is love.

Jesus demonstrated this for us in the way He related to His Father. He didn’t just “do His devotions” once a day. He got alone with the Father every chance He got. Time with the Father was driven by His love for His Father, not something done as a task. That love was kept fresh through time spent in the Father’s presence.

His obedience, driven by love, resulted in our salvation.

Hearing from God in such a dramatic fashion has been rare in my life. It came out of a time of prayer and fasting. But absent such a special experience as that, if we focus on nurturing our relationship with God, we will gain confidence that we are heading in the right direction in our life. Growing in our love for God will help us better hear His voice and take our next step out of the love we feel for Him.

INCREASE YOUR LOVE

In all the busyness of this Advent season, try marking out fifteen minutes in your day to pause and be in the Father's presence. Put it in your calendar and take that time to be quiet before the Lord, listening for His voice. Or maybe you could take that time to watch a short inspirational video, listen to a worship song, or take a walk to enjoy God's creation. Nurture your relationship with the Father to grow your love for Him.

CHRISTMAS IN HONDURAS

When I served in Honduras, the tradition on Christmas eve was for singers to go from house to house looking for the baby Jesus, who was missing from the nativity. This would take place throughout the night hours. Then on Christmas morning the baby would be found in the nativity. The holiday was also a time when family would gather, placing high value on time spent together. They would take the holiday as a time to nurture family and community connections.

ACTIVITY: THANK YOU NOTE

The holiday season is a great time to reflect on the last year. Take a few minutes to think about someone who blessed you over the past year. Maybe it's a new friend, someone who made you laugh, or a family that showed you hospitality.

Then, write that person a short thank-you note. If possible, write it on actual paper and send it in the mail. (Everyone loves getting a note from a friend in the mailbox!) If that's not possible, a text message or email works, too!

